

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8745

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 NEW DELHI 6608

NODIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IN, US

SUBJ: US RESPONSE TO INDIAN CRITICISM: CONVERSATION
WITH THE INDIAN FOREIGN MINISTER

REF: STATE 101888

SUMMARY: IN A MEETING WITH FOREIGN MINISTER CHAVAN ON MAY 16. I REVIEWED THE LONG LIST OF INDIAN CRITICISMS OF THE US. WHILE I NOTED SOME IMPROVEMENT IN WHAT THE PRIME MINISTER AND FOREIGN MINISTER WERE SAYING, OTHER GOVERNMENT AND CONGRESS PARTY OFFICIAL S CONTINUED EXTREME AND UNWARRANTED CRITICISM OF THE US. I TOLD HIM THAT IF THE CRITICISM CONTINUES THE US WILL REVIEW ITS AGREEMENTS WITH INDIA. CHAVAN REPLIED THAT WHAT MATTERED WAS WHAT HE AND THE PRIME MINISTER SAID; I TOLD HIM THAT WASN'T THE WAY IT WORKED IN THE US GOVERNMENT. HE SAID THAT IN LIGHT OF RECENT EVENTS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, HE THOUGHT THE US AND INDIAN SHOULD NOW HAVE A FRIENDLY DIALOGUE. INDIA WANTED GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE US AND I SHOULD RETURN TO THE US WITH A "WARMER FEELING". I BELIEVE WE MUST NOW WAIT TO SEE WHAT EFFECT MY PRESENTATION HAS AND ADJUST OUR RELATIONS WITH INDIA TO THE SITUATION WHICH EMERGES. END SUMMARY.

1. IS STARTED OUT BY TELLING CHAVAN THAT I HAD AN UNPLEASANT TASK TO PERFORM: TO COMPLAIN ABOUT STATEMENTS CRITICIZING THE US WHICH HAD BEEN MADE BY INDIAN OFFICIALS, SOME AS RECENTLY AS THE PREVIOUS EVENING. (THE CONGRESS LEFT--CENTRAL MINISTERS, STATE CHIEF MINISTERS, AND CONGRESS OFFICIALS HAD
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HAD A FIELD DAY AT AN "ANTI FACIST CONFERENCE".) I RECITED

THE LIST: STATEMENTS REFERRING TO US AS FACISTS, AS IMPERIALIST AGGRESSORS, AS A THREAT TO INDIA FROM THE SEA AND ATTACKS MADE ON US FOR HELPING INDIA WITH RESEARCH ON THE GENETIC CONTROL OF MOSQUITOS. ON THE OTHER HAND, WE NOTED WITH APPROVAL RECENT STATEMENTS BY MRS. GANDHI AND CHAVAN ABOUT INDIA'S

DESIRE FOR FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH THE US. BUT, I POINTED OUT, TO HAVE A FRIEND, ONE MUST BE A FRIEND. CHAVAN HAD TOLD PARLIAMENT THAT THE US MUST HAVE RESPECT FOR INDIAN SENSIBILITIES. WE THINK THAT INDIAN MUST HAVE RESPECT FOR US SENSIBILITIES. AMBASSADOR KAUL HAD CLAIMED THAT INDIAN OFFICIALS HAD BEEN MISQUOTED; YET THERE HAD BEEN NO CLARIFICATIONS. KAUL APPARENTLY HAD EVEN SAID THAT THERE WAS NO HOPE FOR GOOD RELATIONS WITH THIS ADMINISTRATION (CHAVAN INTERRUPTED ME TO DENY THIS; I AM SENDING HIM AROUND THE CLIPPING). I TOLD CHAVAN THAT I DIDN'T BELIEVE THAT DAUL WAS ANY HELP IN THIS SITUATION.

2. I THEN EMPHASIZED TWO POINTS TO CHAVAN. FIRST, I WAS AVAILABLE TO THE MINISTER AT ANY TIME IF THERE WAS ANY QUESTION HE HAD ABOUT US POLICY. IF INDIAN OFFICIALS WOULD COME TO US PRIVATLEY, WE COULD WORK OUT AN ACCOMMODATION. IF THERE WAS ANYTHING THEY DID NOT LIKE, THEY SHOULD TELL US SO THAT WE COULD TRY TO CORRECT IT. I QUOTED WHAT CONGRESS PRESIDENT BARUA HAD SAID ABOUT US LAST NIGHT ("THE SAME POWERS WHO HAD WAGED WAR AGAINST INDOCHINA WERE NOW FOCUSING THEIR ATTENTION ON INDIA. THESE IMPERIALIST POWERS DO NOT WANT SOCIALISM AND DEMOCRACY IN THIS COUNTRY") AND RENEWED OUR PLEDGE THAT IF ANY AMERICAN IS GUILTY OF INTERFERENCE IN ANY WAY IN THE AFFAIRS OF THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT, WE WOULD HAVE HIM OUT OF THE COUNTRY WITHIN TWENTY FOUR HOURS.

3. SECOND, I SAID THAT MY INSTRUCTIONS WERE THAT IF THE CRITISM OF THE US CONTINUES, WE WILL REVIEW ALL AGREEMENTS WITH INDIA, INCLUDING SUCH THINGS AS LANDING RIGHTS, EXCHANGE PROGRAMS AND PL 480 (I SAID, "MAYBE YOU DON'T WANT PL 480").

I ALSO POINTED OUT THAT INDIAN CRITICISMS WERE BEING REPORTED IN THE US PRESS. I FEARED THAT AMERICAN TOURISM IN INDIA WOULD CONFIDENTIAL

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BE AFFECTED.

4. I WOUND UP MY PRESENTATION SAYING THE I DID NOT WANT TO BE BLAMED FOR THE COLLAPSE OF INDI-US RELATIONS; I DID NOT WANT TO SEE THIS HAPPEN. BUT I WAS CONCERNED. THE ATMOSPHERE IN THE US WAS VERY SENSITIVE; OUR POLICIES WERE BEING REVIEWED. THERE WAS NO TELLING WHAT THE EFFECT OF CRITICISMS ON US CONCLUSIONS MIGHT BE. SOME DAYS AGO SENATOR HUMPHRY, SPEAKING OF INDIA, HAD

SAID THAT WE WOULD TAKE CRITICISM, BUT NOT ABUSE. SENATOR MANSFIELD SAID THAT THE US SHOULD GET OUT OF ASIA. THINGS SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO REACH A POINT AT WHICH OUR RELATIONS COULD NOT BE SALVAGED. I TOLD HIM THAT WHEN I WAS IN WASHINGTON I WANTED TO ASK THE CONGRESS FOR SOME RUPEES TO SPEND TO BEFEBIT INDIA BUT I FEARED THAT I WOULD HAVE A DIFFICULT TIME CONVINCING THE MEMBERSHIP.

5. CHAVAN SEEMED SHAKEN BY WHAT I HAD HAD TO SAY AND DID NOT REPLY AT LENGTH. OBVIOUSLY ILL AT EASE, HE SAID THAT HE WAS GRATEFUL TO ME FOR SPEAKING ABOUT THESE THINGS. INDIA HAD MATTERS ABOUT WHICH IT HAD TO COMMENT FRANKLY; IT WOULD CONTINUE TO DO SO AND WOULD EXPECT THE US TO DO SO SIMILARLY. INDIA WAS A DEMOCRACY LIKE THE US AND PEOPLE HAD THEIR OWN OPINIONS. HE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT WAS SAID AT THE "CONFERENCE" THE PREVIOUS EVENING BUT WHAT MATTERED WAS WHAT THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE FOREIGN MINISTER SAID. HE REPEATED THIS IDEA LATER: WE SHOULD NOT LISTEN TO THE OTHERS, ONLY TO HIM AND THE PRIME MINISTER. I TOLD HIM US CABINET OFFICERS SPOKE ONLY FOR OFFICIAL POLICY. HE SAID THAT THE GOI HAD GIVEN ITS ASSESSMENT OF EVENTS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. IT DID NOT WANT TO HURT THE US, BUT THIS WAS ITS VIEWS. INDIA WAS GETTING BLAMED FOR NOT SUPPORTING THE US.

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6. IN THE DISCUSSION THAT FOLLOWED SEVERAL THINGS OF INTEREST EMERGED. WHEN I MENTIONED OUR ARMS SALES POLICY AND THAT WE HAD NOT EVEN SOLD ANY ARMS TO PAKISTAN YET; CHAVAN WAS AWARE OF THIS AND POINTED OUT THAT HE HAD ALREADY SAID THAT INDIA SHOULD WAIT AND SEE HOW OUR ARMS SALES POLICY IS CARRIED OUT.

I MENTIONED HOW MANY ARMS FRANCE HAD SOLD TO PAKISTAN WITHOUT CRITICISM; CHAVAN TOOK THE LINE THAT FRANCE WAS SIMPLY SEEKING COMMERCIAL SALES. INDIA EXPECTED MORE FROM THE US. CHAVAN RETURNED TO THE SUBJECT OF SOUTHEAST ASIA AND SAID THAT IN THE LIGHT OF RECENT EVENTS THERE, IT WAS HIS VIEW THAT INDIA AND THE US SHOULD NOW HAVE A FRIENDLY DIALOGUE. HE SAID THAT I SHOULD GO BACK TO THE US WITH THIS IDEA.

7. I DIDN'T WANT TO PROLONG THE CONVERSATION AS I FELT THAT I HAD MADE MY POINT. I SUMMED UP THE SITUATION SAYING THAT I HATED TO SEE US-INDIA RELATIONS RISKED BY IRRESPONSIBLE TALK. WE WERE NOT FACISTS; WE HAD NOT TRAINED SONGBIRDS TO SPY IN INDIA. THE AMERICAN LEADERSHIP WAS PARTICULARLY SENSITIVE NOW; AND WE HAD BEEN CAREFUL WHAT WE HAD SAID ABOUT INDIA. WE HAD NOT SAID ANYTHING ABOUT SIKKIM AND WE HAD NOT CRITICIZED INDIA'S NUCLEAR TEST. IT WAS A RIDICULOUS SITUATION IN WHICH OUR RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION WERE BETTER THAN THOSE WITH INDIA. UNTIL MRS. GANDHI HAD SPOKEN ABOUT A WEEK AGO, I HAD NEVER HEARD THE US MENTIONED AS A FRIEND.

8. CHAVAN CALLED ATTENTION TO THE RESTRAINT WHICH HE HAD EXERCISED WHEN HE HAD BEEN QUESTIONED ABOUT THE US AT THE AIRPORT ON HIS RETURN TO INDIA ON THE PREVIOUS DAY (HE HAD BEEN CONFIDENTIAL

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CAREFUL, AS HE ORDINARILY IS). HE SAID THAT WHEN I RETURNED TO THE US HE WANTED ME TO GO BACK WITH A WARMER FEELING. HE HAD TOLD THE INDIAN CHAIRMEN OF THE SUBCOMMISSIONS TO GET TO WORK; IF THE RESULTS WERE GOOD THEN THEY COULD SEE ABOUT THE COMMISSION MEETING IN WASHINGTON. INDIA WANTED FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH THE US. HE DID NOT WANT HARD FEELINGS. WHEN I STARTED TO LEAVE AFTER WE HAD TALKED ABOUT TWENTY FIVE MINUTES, HE URGED ME TO STAY, SAYING HE HAD RESERVED TIME FOR A LONGER TALK. I NEVERTHELESS DEPARTED.

9. I DIDN'T EXPECT THAT CHAVAN WOULD BE ABLE TO GIVE ME A SATISFACTORY ANSWER ON THE SPOT, AND, AS IS OBVIOUS, HE DID NOT. WE CANNOT ACCEPT A SITUATION IN WHICH WE LISTEN ONLY TO MRS. GANDHI AND CHAVAN WHILE ANY OTHER MINISTER CAN SAY WHATEVER HE LIKES ABOUT US. IT WILL, NEVERTHELESS, BE AN IMPROVEMENT IF THE RESTRAINT BEING CURRENTLY EXERCISED BY THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE FOREIGN MINISTER CONTINUES. WE WILL SIMPLY HAVE TO WAIT AND SEE WHAT THE EFFECT OF MY PRESENTATION IS AND THEN ADJUST THE LEVEL OF OUR RELATIONS TO THE SITUATION WHICH EMERGES. I ALSO LEARNED NOTHING FROM CHAVAN'S BRIEF REFERENCE TO THE SUBCOMMISSION. HIS GOVERNMENT HAS APPARENTLY STILL MADE NO DECISION ABOUT WHETHER OR NOT TO PROCEED TO THE COMMISSION MEETING. IN FACT, CHAVAN HAD LITTLE TO SAY, WAS FLUSTERED, BUT NOW HAS A GOOD DEAL TO THINK ABOUT. OF

COURSE, IT WILL BE MRS. GANDHI'S REACTION WHICH IS IMPORTANT
AND THAT IS COMPLETELY UNPREDICTABLE.
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